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ABSTRACT

An implementation proposal for a needs assessment model for South Carolina's public schools is presented. Part One, a narrative presentation of the suggested procedure, includes: identification of task force members, formation of the expenditure coordination committee, task force training conferences, task force organizational meetings, task force status conferences, development of planning documents, program control seminar and project format, report system to State Department of Education officers, implementation, evaluation, recycling, development of a statewide data collection system, statewide implementation, reports to task forces by supervisor of evaluation, and final decision by the planning task force. Part Two, a schematic representation of the major divisions in the procedure, contains 19 implementation cycle activities. (KM)

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A PROPOSAL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT MODEL

There are two portions to this implementation proposal. Part One is a narrative presentation of the suggested procedure and Part Two is a schematic representation of the major divisions in the procedure.

General Background

One important focus of current education among responsible persons and agencies today is upon the need to maximize the educative effect of the schools. A number of sources of educational policy, including our national government, are now giving more attention to the total problem of educational efficiency. A number of states, under the stimulus of federal funding, are now engaged in the identification of school goals and in the empirical testing of procedures for achieving these goals.

Evaluation of educational processes as a guide to confirmation of employed practices or to the enactment of remediation procedures is, logically, a fundamental aspect of the improvement of educational practice. While the employment of evaluation in earlier years was largely on an informal and inexact basis, state departments of education, as well as other educational agencies, are now becoming highly sensitive to the need to know of the success of instructional programs. Such information is a necessary prior condition to the planning function.

The fulfillment of a needs assessment process in the public schools is dependent upon three conditions. The first condition is that the goal, or criteria in the language of the static model, is known. The second condition is that a method of achieving the desired condition has been proposed. Knowledge of the degree to which the identified method enables goal attainment to be realized is the third condition.

Rationale for Implementation Procedures

While the procedures suggested in this set of steps, or cycle, are couched in the language appropriate for an inschool, student problem such as inadequate achievement in mathematics, the general rationale may be employed with other types of inadequacies including those dealing with inadequate training of teachers, or inadequate physical facilities.

The writer does not entertain the idea that this paper and the set of steps it contains provide an exact paradigm for the realization of the goals for South Carolina's public schools. While it does propose a general, basic set of operations, the exact procedures used in reaching an established goal will depend upon the knowledge and ingenuity of the planning task force members and officers of the State Department of Education.

PART ONE: NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Identification of Task Force Members

The first action to be taken following the acceptance of a proposed method of procedure is the identification of proper departmental project initiators. Project initiators have a responsibility for identifying the composition of each of the eleven planning task forces.

While these departmental officials will, necessarily, develop their own strategy for selection of the educational planning task forces, the writer suggests that planning task forces reflect, in their composition, the wide spectrum of professional responsibility within the public school system and teacher education programs.

Formation of the Expenditure Coordination Committee

As one aspect of the planning task forces' flexibility to react to problems arising during the accomplishment of group goals, ad hoc groups may be formed. One intergroup committee which seems to be logically necessary is an expenditure coordination committee. It is suggested that the identified departmental officers form such a committee, chaired by the Chief Planning Officer, as an extension of the activity of identifying the planning task forces.

Since the responsibilities of the task forces will be diverse, the successful execution of these obligations must require a variety of competencies. It is suggested that each group should include: persons qualified by association with curriculum or educational level (elementary, secondary) in the SDE; persons qualified by experience in working with problems of this type; and persons qualified by their research experience and training. It is further suggested that the Supervisor of Evaluation and persons who have a basic understanding of behavioral terminology and of management control systems participate on each of the planning task forces.

Task Force Training Conferences

An ability to work successfully with many concepts in education is frequently dependent upon the ability to describe, in specific and widely comprehensible language, exactly that which one wishes to communicate. The establishment of defensible educational goals and procedures is dependent upon the statement of these concepts in language that is understandable by all persons. Each planning task force participant must be able to communciate his concepts clearly to all other group members. It is suggested that the proper departmental officers, as an extension of their identification of the planning task forces, identify one or more persons to work with each

planning task force during individual group training sessions. These conferences will be scheduled by each of the participating task forces with the consultation of the selected consultants.

Task Force Organizational Meetings

At a time to be determined by the Office of Planning, and under the direction of the planning officers, each of the planning task forces will meet to become familiar with the objectives of their group. The writer suggests that, as a general procedure, the highest ranking department officer be appointed as the group chairman. The group should then become familiar with this implementation proposal. From this point through the remainder of their activity, they will act autonomously within the constraints of this proposal.

Task Force Status Conferences

At this time it is suggested that representatives from the Office of Research, Research Information Unit (ORRIU), consult with each of the task force planning groups. This procedure should serve the dual function of providing an orientation to this new information service and of allowing descriptors of desired research information to be provided by the planning group task force.

The planning task forces may request and receive additional base data from the proposed management information system and new research data from the ORRIU at any time. This implementation plan does not reflect the need for data of any one planning task force and cannot be a reflection of the data requirements found in the execution of a task force's activities.

Through prior requests either to the Research Information Unit or the Office of Research Statistical Unit and through information acquired from the management information system, each planning task force will be provided with

information regarding the current status of South Carolina schools and school children with respect to the goal of their task group. Representatives of the ORRIU will provide each planning task force with material from the research literature relating to their area of interest.

Development of Planning Documents

A primary responsibility of the planning task forces is the production of planning documents. These documents will include:

(1) Detailed specification of subgoals and goals which are prerequisites and corequisites of the overall goal of that planning task force. The elucidation of subgoals and correlated goals for different projects seem to vary widely in their utility and applicability. This plan suggests that this logical and taxonomic examination should occur only when it leads to a significantly more specifiable goal.

(2) Definition of programs and practices which constitute possible remediation procedures.

(3) Specification of the evaluation procedures to be utilized, including categories of behaviors to be observed and corresponding information sources to be used.

(4) Selection of school systems to serve as trial implementation centers.

(5) Definition, with the assistance of the Office of Research Statistical Section, of the data to be acquired and the format in which data is to be presented for compilation and analysis.

(6) A particularly significant feature of the planning task forces' flexibility is their ability to produce their own data reporting sequence. If the particular general goal is appropriate, it is suggested that the planning task forces elect an "update" system in which the reception of information from the Supervisor of Evaluation may occur one or more times, depending upon the degree of discrepancy between the criteria and reported data, prior to recalling a formal group meeting for subgoal and remediation procedure alteration. An organized meeting of this kind would occur at point 8 in the schematic diagram at any time later than the first pass through the document development-implementation-evaluation cycle.

(7) Specification of the subgoal criteria that are to be used in the evaluation of the remedial procedure.

Program Control Seminar and Project Format

At at time to be selected by each of the task forces, it is suggested that a short seminar program of not less than two nor more than four hours duration be conducted for each of the task forces separately. These seminars would provide a general introduction to management planning and control systems as they are exemplified by the Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) and the Convergence Technique (CT).

Since it is desirable for each planning task force to be able to continually evaluate their progress toward meeting their group goal, it is suggested that a standard management control outline such as PERT or CT be constructed for each project. The training seminar should allow the planning task force to make a judicious selection among the various procedures for program evaluation.

Report System to SDE Officers

It is suggested that a system for reporting information to State Department officers be made a part of the implementation program. Basic features of this information system should include:

(1) Reports at each activity end point indicated in the schematic diagram of this suggested procedure.

(2) Presentation of information at the completion of each major stage in each task force's implementation plan.

(3) Reports issued each time the planning task force meets to consider alternate strategies for goal achievement.

A large amount of freedom is left for the planning task forces. They must use this freedom to develop effective and, perhaps, unique methods of procedure. It is widely recognized that the public school system is generally inefficient and either does little to overcome the motivation and learning problems which children bring to school or it helps to engender difficulties to further learning progress. Task force group members must,

in order to maximally contribute to the achievement of their overall goal, imagine and evaluate for implementation both new educational procedures and strategies that are known through experience to be effective.

Implementation

The program selected as a tentative remediation procedure is instituted in the selected pilot study institutions.

Evaluation

At point of time selected by the individual planning task force, reports will be provided to the Supervisor of Evaluation of the Office of Research. The evaluator will examine the reported data in relationship to the subgoal criteria generated as a portion of the planning document of each planning task force.

The evaluator will provide reports to each of the planning group members after each data report or at the discretion of the planning task force.

Recycling

A necessary aspect of the program is the flexibility given to the planning task force to revise their remedial procedures after previous systems are known to be ineffective.

Planning task forces have the flexibility to alter the subgoals, procedures, and subgoal criteria used in the evaluation of their program's success. The failure of remedial actions then will be followed by extensions of the planning documents to include further remedial programs and associated plans.

Development of a Statewide Data Collection System

Persons who are familiar with the developing management information system and Office of Research Statistical Unit will assist each planning

task force develop a system for obtaining statewide information on the success of each strategy. In particular instances, this will mean only an elaboration of the system used for the collection of pilot study information, while in other situations the basic data format will require extensive modification.

In some situations the data parameters required for the statewide implementation will be those utilized in the earlier pilot study. In many other situations, it will be of importance to know of the differential effect of school parameters (school size, special course offerings and others) on the efficacy of the goal achievement strategy.

It seems desirable for the management information system to serve as a basis for the acquisition of statewide information. In order for the new management information system to be employed, school system parameters, desired task force input and the data storage characteristics of the management information system must be defined.

Statewide Implementation

One or more procedures which have demonstrated effectiveness in pilot study implementation will be implemented on a statewide basis. The planning task forces may, at their discretion, elect to apply the proposed strategy to schools selected for particular pupil, program or environmental conditions while utilizing a different strategy with other schools.

Reports to Task Forces by Supervisor of Evaluation

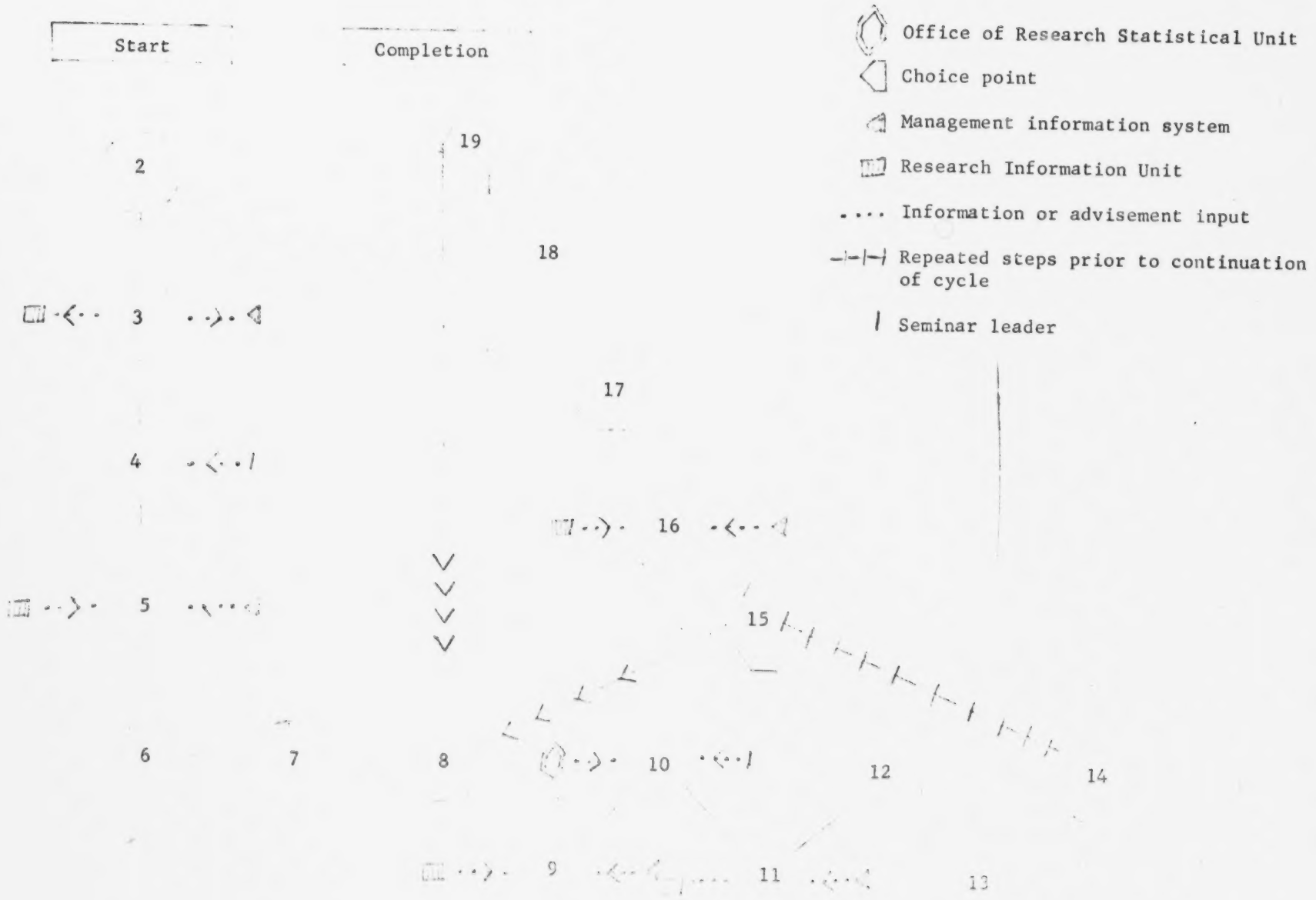
The Supervisor of Evaluation will provide concise reports to each of the planning task forces of the success of their strategies on a schedule prepared by the individual task force. Data parameters specified by the planning task force will be used to classify the experimental data.

Final Decision by the Planning Task Force

The planning task force will evaluate the statewide success of the strategy in reaching the established goal. A rejection of the strategy will necessarily return the task force to a consideration of alternate strategies and will require pilot study of any new proposed method, thus implying that a recycling through the process of strategy evaluation must be employed.

If the established goal is attained and no more effective system is proposed, the developmental cycle is complete. If the planning task force wishes to utilize a strategy that seems to be more promising than one previously proposed, a return to the point in the cycle where strategies are pilot tested is required.

PART TWO: NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE



IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE ACTIVITIES

1. Initiation of SDE officers.

2. Selection of:

   (1) Planning task forces.
   (2) Identification of the coordinating committee.
   (3) Identification of the director for the behavioral language seminar.
   (4) Identification of the director for the management control seminar.

3. Identification of problem.
   Structuring of groups.
   Familiarization with the implementation proposal.
   Identification of descriptors for the ORI and MIS.

4. Training conference - Introduction to behavioral terminology.

5. Task force status conference - Input is provided from MIS and ORI.

6. Performance behaviors are specified.

7. Definition of remediation procedures.

8. Establishment of evaluation program.

9. Data definition and report format design.
   Input from ORSU and MIS.

10. Management control seminar and control chart development.

11. School selection.
    Input from MIS and ORI.

12. School implementation (pilot study).

13. Periodic school reports.

14. Report evaluation and submission to task force members by Supervisor of Evaluation and appropriate SDE members.

15. Task force members elect:

    (1) To continue present strategy for longer experimentation period,
    (2) To implement the strategy on a statewide basis or,
    (3) Substitute a different procedure.

16. Report system modified for use through MIS.

17. Statewide implementation (of one or more procedures). Input of ORI and MIS.

18. Preparation of reports by Supervisor of Evaluation.

19. Information input to the planning task forces. Planning task forces will decide that the goal has been reached or may utilize an alternate strategy.

COMPLETION DATES FOR SELECTED IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE ACTIVITIES

STEP	COMPLETION DATE
1	August 28, 1970
2	September 4, 1970
3	September 18, 1970
4	October 9, 1970
5	October 16, 1970
7	November 4, 1970
8	November 18, 1970
9	November 30, 1970
10	December 20, 1970
11	February 5, 1971

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